

Message Text

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 4424

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UN, VN, SN

SUBJECT: LEE KUAN YEW ON VIETNAM

REF: SINGAPORE 4409

1. DURING HIS BBC INTERVIEW (REFTEL), LEE KUAN YEW ALSO COMMENTED ON A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS RELATING TO VIETNAM. REGARDING THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN STATE-TO-STATE AND PARTY-TO-PARTY RELATIONS FACING THE SRV, LEE SAID "WHETHER THEIR WILL (TO FOMENT REVOLUTION)...WILL BE TEMPERED BY THEIR DESIRE TO GET GOOD STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS, ECONOMIC COOPERATION, WHICH WOULD HELP THEIR REHABILITATION, THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER. THAT DEPENDS ON HOW THE (ASEAN) COUNTRIES...REACT AT THIS DUAL APPROACH...AND WHETHER WE CAN COLLECTIVELY AND INDIVIDUALLY MAKE IT MORE PROFITABLE FOR THE VIETNAMESE TO HAVE GOOD STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS IN RETURN FOR LESS PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE INTERFERENCE".

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2. LEE ALSO DISCUSSED THAILAND'S INSURGENCY PROBLEM.

"IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THE KHMER ROUGHE WILL HAVE THE INCLINATION OR THE RESOURCES TO SPARK OFF REVOLUTION IN THAILAND. IN FACT THE HISTORY OF THE THAI COMMUNIST PARTY SHOWED HELP HAS COME FROM ELSEWHERE. NOW WHETHER FROM THE LAOTIAN BORDER YOU CAN SPREAD REVOLUTION BEYOND THE LAO-INHABITED PROVINCES OF THAILAND, THAT HAS TO BE SEEN. AND WHETHER IF REVOLUTION IS SPREAD IN THIS WAY AND THEREBY INFLUENCE GAINED OVER REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS IN THAILAND IN THIS MANNER, OTHER SOURCES OF REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR AND STRENGTH WILL SIT BACK AND WATCH THEIR SUPPORTERS SWITCH ALLEGIANCE. THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER. SO IT'S QUITE A COMPLEX SITUATION."

3. ASKED HOW MUCH HE THOUGHT COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IN THIS AREA IS AFFECTED BY THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA, LEE SAID THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE LAOTIANS OR ANYBODY ELSE ARE ACTING ON BEHALF OF THE SOVIET UNION. "BUT IT WOULD MAKE SENSE THAT IF, FOR INSTANCE, CHINA IS FINDING IT INCONVENIENT AT THIS TIME TO STEP UP REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES, OTHERS WOULD FIND IT AN ATTRACTIVE TIME TO DO SO. I THINK THAT WOULD BE A FAIR INFERENCE."

4. WHEN QUERIED ON THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF THE ASEAN ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY (ZPFN), LEE DEMURRED. REGARDING THE COMPATIBILITY OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN REGION WITH ZPFN, LEE IN EFFECT STATED DIS-APPEARANCE OF FOREIGNERS NOW WOULD BE PREMATURE: "OTHERS HAVE GOT TO SHOW THAT THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF PUTTING US INTO THE MEAT GRINDER AND I HAVE SEEN NO ASSURANCES THAT THE MEAT GRINDERS STOP GRINDING".

5. ON SRV ADMISSION INTO THE UN, LEE SAID THAT GOS WOULD IN PRINCIPLE SUPPORT VIETNAM'S APPLICATION. "WE WANT EVERYBODY TO BE MEMBERS OF" AND "TO ABIDE BY THE CHARTER OF THE UN TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND ORDERLY RELATIONS WITH ALL NATIONS IN THE WORLD ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAPPEN TO LIVE NEAR THEM". LEE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SRV COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY THE PROMISED US VETO. "THEY KNOW EXACTLY HOW THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMERICAN PRESIDENT WOULD REACT WHEN THEY ONLY GIVE THE NAMES OF 12 AIRMEN...WHEN THERE ARE SOME 2,000 PLUS OTHER MISSING PERSONS...DURING A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR".

6. COMMENT: NONE OF THE FOREGOING IS ESPECIALLY NEW. HOWEVER, IT DOES SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE PROCESS BY WHICH LEE'S UTTERANCES ARE TRANSFORMED INTO QUASI-

OFFICIAL POLICY STATEMENTS: IT SEEMS FAIRLY OBVIOUS THAT
SEPTEMBER 15 STRAIT TIMES (ST) EDITORIAL (SINGAPORE
4325) ON SRV MEMBERSHIP IN UN WAS BASED ON LEE'S BBC
INTERVIEW OF PREVIOUS DAY. LESS CLEAR IS THE GOS
PRIVATE POSITION REGARDING SRV ADMISSION TO THE UN.
(MFA OFFICIAL IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON
SEPTEMBER 22 VOLUNTEERED PRAISE OF U.S. PROMISE TO VETO
SRV APPLICATION, SAYING IT HAD "SAVED ASEAN CHESTNUTS".)
NEVERTHELESS, WE CONTINUE TO FEEL (SEE SINGAPORE 4325)
THAT SINGAPORE HOPES GRACE PERIOD OBTAINED BY U.S.
VETO THREAT CAN BE USED TO SECURE FROM THE SRV PUBLIC
ASSURANCE OF GOOD BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ITS SEA NEIGHBORS.
GRANT

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